



16 October 2024

Dear Associate Provost Han and Dean Sippial,

Thank you again for the opportunity this morning to share my approach to teaching the course, UFE 101 Understanding Poverty, a required course for the Social Innovation and Leadership minor associated with the Dr. Robert E. Witt University Fellows Program.

As we discussed, the course is largely lecture-driven with book discussion days scattered throughout the semester. Lectures are based on data from sources such as the US Census Bureau, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Department of Health & Human Services, among others. In addition, lectures draw from research findings published in peer-reviewed academic journals. Questions are posed to the class to prompt discussion. If student comments are one sided, I ask if anyone has a different perspective or view to add to the discussion. If a student does not offer alternative views, I do.

Department of
Political Science

Honors College

I have never in this class, or in any class I've taught in over twenty years, directed or compelled students to affirm, adopt, adhere to, or assent to a "divisive concept".

I appreciated your confirmation and support of academic freedom of faculty to determine appropriate reading materials for their courses.

Thank you for bringing the concerns of these three students to my attention. As I told you at the beginning of our meeting, I just discovered yesterday that the freshmen cohort independently held a presidential debate watch party on September 10 which culminated in a heated argument and hurt feelings. Had I been aware of this earlier, I would have engaged the cohort in conversation about it. I have been told by Fellows in the sophomore cohort that the debate fallout is a continuing source of "conflict and tension" in the cohort surrounding political opinions. It is possible this heightened atmosphere of distrust amongst themselves is contributing to a lack of confidence to engage in direct communication. I will carefully consider how to help the cohort mend this divide, as it is a core tenet of the Witt University Fellows Program to engage in thoughtful and respectful conversations in our community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dana Patton".

Dana Patton, Ph.D.
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Director, The Dr. Robert E. Witt University Fellows Program



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